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GPHY 504.01: Geographical Research

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GEOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

(GPHY 504)

- Fall 2014 -

Class Meets: M 3:10 – 4 pm; Stone Hall 217

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Office Hours: W 2 – 3 pm and F 11 am – 12 pm; and by appointment

Course Overview

Course Description

Geographical Research is a one-credit course that is part of a required two-course sequence. The spring two-credit course is *Research Design* (GPHY 505). The overall aim of this two-course sequence is to help students broaden their understanding of the diversity of empirical, theoretical, and methodological approaches within the discipline of Geography. Further, the intention is to provide a launching point for gaining the necessary background and skills in geographic inquiry and for producing meaningful, significant, and rigorous research that is worthy of a graduate degree.

Objectives

GPHY 504 has the explicit objective of assisting graduate students in developing a strategy for undertaking a significant research project. This semester you will be expected to situate yourself within the discipline of Geography and to complete the course with a research topic in hand. In *Research Design* (GPHY 505) during the spring semester, you will develop your own research proposal for a thesis, professional paper, or other major research project. By the end of the academic year, students will be expected to formally present their proposals to their colleagues in class and to members of their graduate committees.

In order to succeed in developing a viable research topic and preparing a sound proposal supported by the committee chair, students must communicate with their advisor/chair of their committee from the very beginning and at critical stages of the research planning process. If you do not yet have a research advisor, you must find one by the third week of class, as his/her input will be a very important part of the work you do for this course.

Topics and Structure

We will first look at the role that research plays in a graduate degree, and how to craft a viable research agenda in a very general sense. We will discuss Geography as a highly diverse discipline and identify the different trajectories of research within this dynamic and synthetic field of study. This background is intended to help students find 'their place' in Geography and to identify areas of substantive interest and concern. The success of this course depends on each student's identification of an area of research or professional focus.

We will have sessions on identifying a topic and a research problem, articulating a research question, bibliographic resources, funding your thesis research, and writing and scholarship. By November, you should be in a position to craft a project prospectus or small grant proposal and to develop the structure of your research plan. The project prospectus will outline your research topic and its significance, and you will also be expected to give a presentation on your proposed project to the other students.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course you will have the following capabilities:

1. Build the foundation for preparing a solid research prospective.
2. Understand the general trajectories of research in contemporary geography, including the ability to frame geographic investigations in relation to the systematic branches of the discipline.
3. Demonstrate skills in academic writing, research, geo-methodologies, grantsmanship, and oral communication.
4. Engage with a learning community of graduate students and faculty by sharing ideas, exchanging theoretical and methodological insights with each other, and supporting the research enterprise.

Course Policies**Class Attendance and On-time Appearance**

Attendance is recorded. Class attendance is essential to your success in class. Excessive lateness disturbs everyone else – please appear on time.

Open Door & One-on-one Discussions

Please feel free to stop by during office hours or when my door is open to ask any questions you may have regarding the class. Please use this opportunity WHEN NEEDED.

Accommodations

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and [Disability Services for Students](#). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in Lommasson Center 154 or call 406.243.2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.

Academic Integrity

“All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at: http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php.”

Readings**Readings**

All readings will be available for download on Moodle. We will discuss these readings in class, so make sure to read the assigned text before class. This will aid in understanding the material that will be presented during the class period and for the development of any questions about the material you may have.

Required text:

Turabian, K.L. 2007. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th Edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Parts of the following texts will be distributed in class. However, the entire texts are *recommended* as additional readings for this course.

Gaile, G.L., Willmott, C.J. (eds). 2005. *Geography in America at the Dawn of the 21st Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Solem, M.N., Foote, K.E., Monk, J.J. 2009. *Aspiring Academics: A Resource Book for Graduate Students and Early Career Faculty*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Activities

Class Discussion and Participation

You are expected to attend class and to participate in class discussions. Some weeks will involve extensive class discussion while others will not; nevertheless, you are expected to do the assignments and reading and to be prepared to engage in a discussion every week. You should also be prepared to talk about the status of your progress, as we will use any additional time at the end of class for students to get feedback from each other. In addition, you are expected to give feedback to other students on some of the written assignments and on the proposed research projects.

Colloquium Attendance and Discussion

Attendance at the department's weekly colloquium (GPHY 500) is mandatory. You will lead one discussion of a colloquium presentation of your choice. You are free to take any approach to the organization of your discussion; however, some emphasis must be placed on the overall *research approach and methodology* presented.

Discussion of the Readings

You will lead one of our weekly discussions of the assigned reading. To complement and update the set of chapters for which you are responsible, you will also be assigning to the rest of the class an appropriate "Presidential Address" or review/progress article from the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* that summarizes the state of research in the relevant sub-field in Geography.

Project Prospectus/Grant Proposal and Presentation

The primary written product of this semester will be a research proposal prospectus or grant proposal following the format that we will be discussing in class. This assignment also includes a reading list drawing together relevant works by geographers. Early in the semester you need to agree on a research topic with your advisor and begin developing a reading list appropriate for your proposal topic. There will be a large range in the specificity of students' research plans at this stage in the research process. You will be expected to provide a 15 minute oral presentation of your project.

Looking Ahead

- Late September: Meet with your advisor and discuss your research interests. Ask him/her how to best acquire a background in your intended field of study: He/she may recommend theses or dissertations that are related to your interests. Ask about relevant authors in your field of research, about important professional journals, and about seminal works (books, articles) that you should know (the "Must Reads").
- Regularly (several times per week) develop the habit of reading articles from important professional journals in the field of Geography such as *The Professional Geographer*, *Annals of the Association of American Geographer*, *Geographical Review*, *Progress in Human Geography*, *Progress in Physical Geography*, *Journal of Geography*, *Geoforum*, *Economic Geography*, *Mountain Research and Development*, and those pointed out by your advisor.
- Attend a thesis defense during this academic year.

Additional Information

- For assistance with writing, please consult the on-line resources of the UM Writing Center, Liberal Arts 144 <http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter>
- Please consult the Dean of Students' website for the Student Conduct Code <http://ordway.umt.edu/SA/VP/SA/index.cfm/name/StudentConductCode>.
- Use the website of the Graduate School to thoroughly familiarize yourself with relevant policies and procedures, <http://www.umt.edu/grad/>.
- Utilize the resources and information presented on the Department of Geography listserv.

- Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). “Reasonable” means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications. (For other options see <http://www.umt.edu/disability>)

Work Evaluation and Final Grading

Your grade in the course will be based on a series of assignments and activities as follows:

Weekly class discussion and participation	10%
Discussion of colloquium presentation	15%
Discussion of reading	15%
Written project prospectus/grant proposal and reading list	40%
Oral presentation of research prospectus	20%

Grading Scheme

93-100	A	83-86	B+	77-79	C+	67-69	D+	<60	F
		87-89	B	73-76	C	63-66	D		
90-92	A-	80-82	B-	70-72	C-	60-62	D-		

Late assignments will be penalized. An assignment that is turned in one day late will have 10% of the available points deducted from the score. An assignment that is turned in two days late will have 20% of the available points deducted from the score. No credit will be awarded for assignments that are more than two days late. "Day" denotes a business day (Monday through Friday) not the time interval between class meetings. For example, an assignment that is due on Thursday but turned in on Monday will be counted two days late.

Tentative Topics

August 25	The Importance of Research and the Graduate Research Experience
Topics:	An introduction to our semester plan, including: (1) the value of meaningful and rigorous research in an advanced degree program and in professional life; (2) the research interests of participants; and (3) details of the course organization.
September 1	Holiday: Labor Day – No Class
September 8	Contemporary Research in Geography: A Broad Overview
Topics:	An initial discussion of the major research trajectories in the discipline, including attention to the range of theoretical and methodological approaches that are employed.
Readings:	Gaile, G.L., Willmott, C.J. (eds). 2005. <i>Geography in America at the Dawn of the 21st Century</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Introduction). Holt-Jensen, A. 2009. <i>Geography. History and Concepts: A Student's Guide, 4th Edition</i> . Los Angeles: Sage. (Chapter 1).
Assignment:	Identify at least three major areas that 'map' onto your interests, academic and professional goals, and research topic. Come to class prepared to discuss what types of research questions, approaches, methodologies, and skills are being used in your sub-field of interest.
September 15	The Graduate Thesis Project
Topics:	Prospectus, Proposal, and Thesis. What is the difference?
Reading:	Turabian, K.L. 2007. <i>A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 7th Edition</i> . Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (Chapter 1).
Assignment:	Develop a first outline of an imaginary thesis.
Guest:	Dr. David Shively
September 22	Resources for Geographical Research I
Topics:	Research tools and resources available through the Mansfield Library and effective bibliographic search strategies. We will be meeting in the Mansfield Library in the Buckhous Room/ 2 nd Level. Please arrive a few minutes early if possible.
Reading:	Turabian, K.L. 2007. <i>A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 7th Edition</i> . Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (Chapters 9 and 10).
Assignment:	Begin reviewing the selection of thesis research and grant proposals in our "Exemplary Proposals" file on Moodle. Bring a few observations (approximately 3-4 observations) about their strengths and weaknesses to share with others at the very beginning of our session.
Guest:	Karen Jaskar
September 29	Resources for Geographical Research II
Topics:	Sources of funding of graduate research, process of grant writing, and major elements of research and grant proposals.
Readings:	Solem, M., Cheung, I., Schlemper, B. 2008. Skills in Professional Geography: An Assessment of Workforce Needs and Expectations. <i>The Professional Geographer</i> , 60 (3): 356-373. Solís, P. 2009. Preparing Competitive Research Grant Proposals. In: Solem, M.N., Foote, K.E., Monk, J.J. (eds.), <i>Aspiring Academics: A Resource Book for Graduate Students and Early Career Faculty</i> . Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 139-166.

Assignment:	Begin visiting with your faculty mentors about potential sources of funding for your research and also seek examples of successful grant proposals.
Guest:	Dr. Heather Almquist
October 6	Contemporary Research in Geography I: Mountain Geography
Topics:	Defining and refining research problems and questions in the realm of mountain geography.
Reading:	Byers, A.C., Price, L.W., Price, M.F. 2013. Introduction to Mountains. In: Price, M.F., Byers, A.C., Friend, D.A., Kohler, T., Price, L.W. (eds.), <i>Mountain Geography: Physical and Human Dimensions</i> . Berkely: University of California Press, 1-10. Friend, D.A. 2002. Mountain Geography in 2002: The International Year of Mountains. <i>The Geographical Review</i> , 92, iii-vi. Marston, R.A. 2008. Land, life, and environmental change in mountains. <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i> , 98, 507-520. Peattie, R. 1936. Introduction. In: Peattie, R., <i>Mountain Geography - A Critique and Field Study</i> . New York: Greenwood Press, 3-8. Price, L.W. 1981. What is a mountain? In: Price, L.W., <i>Mountains and Man: A Study of Process and Environment</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press, 1-5.
Assignment:	Be prepared to address these questions: (1) what are the research problems and questions addressed in this field of study? (2) why are these research questions significant in human geography? And (3) what are the broader impacts for geography, science, and society?
Guest:	Dr. Sarah Halvorson
October 13	Contemporary Research in Geography II: Sustainability Studies
Topics:	Strategies of defining and refining research problems and questions within sustainability studies.
Reading:	TBA
Assignment:	Be prepared to address these questions: (1) what are the research problems and questions addressed in this field of study? (2) why are these research questions significant to building knowledge and understanding of human-environment dynamics? And (3) what are the broader impacts for geography, science, and society?
Guest:	Dr. Thomas Sullivan
October 20	Contemporary Research in Geography III: Hazard Studies
Topics:	Discussion of a UM master thesis with the author.
Reading:	Peter Bordokoff. 2014. <i>A Geographic Perspective of Climate Change and Adaptation in Upper Svaneti, Georgia</i> . M.A. Thesis, Department of Geography, University of Montana.
Assignment:	Plan to discuss the research problems addressed by the various methods presented, the rationale for using these methods, and other methods that might be used in complementary ways to address similar research problems and questions.
Guest:	Peter Bordokoff
October 27	Contemporary Research in Geography IV: Cartography and GIScience
Topic:	Discussion of a UM master thesis with the author.
Reading:	Kevin McManigal. 2011. <i>Retracing the 1910 Carruthers Royal Geographical Society Expedition to the Turgun Mountains of Mongolia: Reconstruction of a Century of Glacier Variations</i> . M.S. Thesis, Department of Geography, University of Montana.

Assignment:	In your reading, consider the nature and sources of data, data collection strategies, and data analysis employed as well as the empirical observations and concerns in the work presented.
Guest:	Kevin McManigal
November 3	Contemporary Research in Geography and Allied Disciplines I
Topics:	Experiences from the Geographical Colloquium (GPHY 500)
Assignment:	Visit the Geographical Colloquium and take notes. Be prepared for a discussion.
Discussants:	Rachel Powers and Annalisa Ingegno
November 9	Contemporary Research in Geography and Allied Disciplines II
Topic:	Experiences from the Geographical Colloquium (GPHY 500)
Assignment:	Visit the Geographical Colloquium and take notes. Be prepared for a discussion.
Discussants:	Verena Henners and Lauren Mackey
November 17	Course Review
Topics:	Looking back and ahead
Assignment:	The first draft of your research prospectus or grant proposal is due .
November 24	Project Presentations I
Topic:	Presentation of your project prospectus.
Discussants:	Verena Henners and Annalisa Ingegno
December 1	Project Presentations II
Topic:	Presentation of your project prospectus.
Assignment:	The final draft of the research prospectus/grant proposal with Advisor sign-off is due .
Discussants:	Rachel Powers and Lauren Mackey
Finals Week	Individual Meetings to be scheduled December 9-11
Topic:	The objectives of the meeting are to review your progress to date with me and for you to identify and discuss your upcoming short- and long-term research project goals.